

they can kill you,
the praisers can kill you,
the young girls can kill you,
the blue-eyed boys in English I
who send warm letters
hand-written
on lined paper
can kill you,
and they're right:
2 packs a day and the bottle
can kill you
too.

of course,
anything can kill you
and something eventually
will. all I can say is that
today
I have just inserted a new
typewriter ribbon
into this old machine
and I am pleased with the way it
works. that makes for more than just an
ordinary day, thank
you.

finish

it's all over, she says,
laying on top of me,
it's all over, I can feel that it's
all over.

it is 11 a.m. and the sun is coming
through the curtains and in the upper left
corner of the room
a red spider builds a new
web.

you've got all these women primed,
she says,
you laying around on their beds and
smoking cigarettes and talking about
books and music, Virginia Woolf and
Bach and all that
shit.

but they don't kiss like I do, she continues,
they kiss like this...

like that? I ask. umm, that's pretty good.

like this, this is how they kiss, she says.

ah, that's nice, I say.

how about a shave? she asks.

o.k. but if you cut my throat I promise you I will strangle you to death before I die.

(she gets the things and comes back, lathers me and begins...)

you oughta let the hair grow more on the sides... you got those two holes there where you got teeth missing and your face goes in there. open your mouth. I want to see your teeth.

no.

come on, open your mouth.

no.

ooo, I cut you! I cut your throat.

it's all right.

now I've cut your throat on the other side.

it's all right, I do it myself.

you'll never know another woman like me.

I suppose not.

(she puts the things away and comes back...)

I've picked every blackhead out of you, now you'll be ready for the next woman.

I better get out of here, I say,
I haven't done any work
today.

here, let me comb your
hair. going to take me to the harness
races tonight?

they don't run until
September.

o. well, let's have a baby then.
a little Charles. wouldn't that be sweet,
running about?

I suppose. listen, I'll be back tonight,
9:30 o.k.?

o.k. look, that red spider gets closer and
closer...

don't worry, if he's male you won't have any
trouble.

don't forget, she says, to clean your teeth with
dental floss or you're going to lose the rest
of them.

sure, I say,
9:30.

55 beds in the same direction

these brilliant midnights
gabardine snakes passing through
walls, sounds
broken by car crashes of drunks in
ten year old cars

you know it's soiled again and then
again

it's in these brilliant midnights
while fighting moths and tiny
mosquitoes,
your woman behind you
twisting in the blankets
thinking you no longer love her;
that's untrue, of course,
but the walls are familiar and